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Spring Greetings!

After the drought and excessive heat we all experienced last year, I’m ready—and I hope you are too—for a new growing season. The way I see it, last summer’s weather took all of the fun out of gardening. No one wanted to be outside in the extreme conditions, including many plants! So it’s with great anticipation that I look forward to gardening this year.

It’s highly unlikely that the 2016 growing season will repeat itself. But be prepared to experience the impact of last year’s drought in the garden for some time. I wouldn’t be surprised to see really old oak trees and other established plants die a slow death over as long as the next two years! You’ll have to read further in this issue to understand why and to learn of the many great drought-tolerant plants you can use to replace what you may have lost last year.

In addition to last year’s weather, pollinator plants are a topic on my mind and something I want to address in this issue. So many of our important pollinators are threatened, and they affect 35 percent of the world’s crop production and increase the output of eighty-seven of the leading food crops worldwide. Extending a little garden hospitality to these creatures could go a long way. Joan Worley has written a wonderful review of a book focused on attracting pollinators to your garden.

Besides adding pollinator-attracting plants to your garden, there are other things to be done. You’ll find several wonderful symposia have been planned throughout the season in Knoxville. Oodles of classes, workshops, and camps for young and old alike are happening at both the Knoxville and Crossville Gardens. The Jackson Gardens will once again host the much-anticipated Summer Celebration. And why not kick-off the gardening season by attending our spring gala in Knoxville? It’s the biggest and most important fundraising event we have for the year, and it’s plant-focused, fun, and casual. I’m thrilled that Sherri Parker Lee is our host this year. With her help, we will honor the Knoxville Garden Club for its deep roots and rich history not only in Knoxville, but the UT Gardens, Knoxville, as well.

I hope to see you in the Gardens,
For centuries, peonies have been garden favorites thanks to their spectacular blooms that beckon passersby with their beauty.

Most gardeners are familiar with herbaceous peonies and their larger, woody cousins the tree peony. What many may find unfamiliar is that Itoh peonies—a rare cross between those two species—are praised for having the best characteristics of both. Itoh peonies have strong stems; finely cut foliage; and large, showy flowers held upright with no need for staking like a tree peony, yet which die back to the ground in winter like herbaceous types. Stunning dinner-plate-sized flowers encompass the 2- to 3-foot-tall plant with an extended bloom period lasting up to four weeks. The exquisite flower display is twice as long as herbaceous peonies, and available selections can produce up to eighty blooms during one season.

In 1948 Toichi Ito, a Japanese breeder, was the first to successfully cross a tree peony with an herbaceous peony. After pollinating 1,200 plants individually, he made the rare cross with *Paeonia* x ‘Alice Harding’, a hybrid tree peony, and *P. lactiflora* ‘Kakoden’, an herbaceous peony. Of the original thirty-six seedlings produced, nine had the desired dominant characteristics of the showy tree peony. Unfortunately, Itoh died in 1956 before his seedlings bloomed. They remained under the care of his son-in-law until they made their blooming debut in 1964. The flowers produced were deep, true yellow, a color unavailable in herbaceous peonies but which had long been sought by breeders.

These hybrids would have been lost to horticulture forever had a retired accountant turned stockbroker from Brooklyn not taken notice. Louis Smirnow developed a passion for peonies during the 1930s, which led him to open a mail-order nursery specializing in tree peonies. Smirnow’s search to find outstanding peonies took him on extensive travels around the globe, leading to Tokyo in 1966 where he found many peony treasures. The hybrids he found featured the pure yellow and golden hues absent in herbaceous peonies.

Smirnow negotiated with Itoh’s widow and secured several plants to be propagated and introduced in the United States. In 1974, four of these intersectional peonies were registered with the American Peony Society as ‘Yellow Crown’, ‘Yellow Dream’, ‘Yellow Emperor’, and ‘Yellow Heaven’. They were the first Itoh peonies to be sold in the US, but they remained elusive to gardeners for several years because of their high cost, which ranged from $300 to $1,000 per plant. In the 1980s, American breeders, most notably Don Hollingsworth and Roger Anderson, were finally successful in cultivating their own intersectional hybrids and registering them with the APS. However, propagation by division remained the primary method of production and continued to be too costly for average gardeners. It would be several decades until Itoh peonies were mass produced by tissue culture, which reduced costs and made them comparatively more affordable.

While the original Itoh cultivars are hard to find, newer selections are available featuring higher quality characteristics and vigor, most notably ‘Bartzella’, ‘Cora Louise’, and ‘Garden Treasure’. Like other peony types, site selection is critical to achieve maximum plant performance. Plantings should be in full sun and in well-drained, neutral to slightly alkaline soil.

Itoh peonies are an excellent addition to any garden and can be used as specimen plants, in groupings, or in borders.
While returning to Knoxville after a visit to Minnesota this past summer, my travelling companions asked, “Should we stop in Janesville, Wisconsin, and visit the Rotary Botanical Gardens?”

The vote was yes, we'll stop, but it'll be a quick trip through the gardens, and then back in the car.

Once we pulled into the parking lot, I think we all knew this wasn't going to be a quick trip! The entrance was so vibrant and screaming with color that we couldn't wait to get to the garden itself.

The site was established in 1988 by the Janesville Rotary Clubs on what was an old sand and gravel quarry. The property, owned by the city, was filled with debris and equipment. The Rotarians started a cleanup project that would last for many years.

Rotary Gardens is an award-winning botanical showcase and an All-America Selections display garden. The 20 acres contains more than 4,000 varieties of plants and features over twenty-four dramatic and themed gardens. Some of the gardens have an international focus, such as the Japanese Garden (ranked in the top 25 in North America), Scottish, French Formal, Italian, and English Cottage Gardens. As you meander down the winding paths you'll find many less formally structured gardens, including one of the very few Fern and Moss gardens recognized by the Hardy Fern Foundation in the United States, as well as Shade (the Hosta are everywhere!), Prairie, Woodland, and Heirloom Gardens.

The Sunken Garden was my favorite. The entrance is a stone arch that was once the entrance to Parker Pen Company’s world headquarters (located in Janesville until 2010). It was the most intimate garden, having a perimeter of limestone walls, a clipped hedge of eastern arborvitae framing it, massive cottonwoods and honey locusts providing dappled shade, and beautiful pocket plantings along the walkways.

Rotary Gardens is 100 percent self-funded and welcomes an estimated 100,000 visitors each year. It is a botanical treasure enjoyed by both the community and visitors from around the country and the world. The peaceful, beautiful site is a destination for educational programs, family events, weddings, and community gatherings.

Every year the Rotary Gardens sponsors a Garden Art Project developed to promote community participation as well as to raise awareness and support for the gardens. Local artists and people of all skill levels interpret a fun and creative design that is placed on display in the Gardens. This year it was the Flight of the Hummingbird. Twenty-seven artists’ renderings of hummingbirds were mounted on garden posts and displayed throughout the gardens.

We ended our visit in the Cottage Garden Gallery, which was full of pieces crafted by local artisans and priced for every budget. The gallery contained some of the most distinctive items that I’ve had the opportunity to find in one place.

Rotary Gardens is the kind of place to visit again and again. So if you find yourself anywhere near Janesville, Wisconsin, please make this one of your stops. Oh, and the moral to this garden visit, along with many others that I have visited, is there really are no quick trips to a garden and the Rotary Gardens is certainly no exception.
MY FAVORITE THINGS

PHLOX

By Jason Reeves, UT Gardens, Jackson, Research Horticulturist
Phlox is a staple in most perennial gardens. All species of phlox are native to North America. They attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds to the garden, and many make good cut fragrant flowers.

Following are two selections that you’ll want to add to your garden; both are proven performers in Tennessee.

Garden phlox (Phlox paniculata) is perhaps the most commonly grown species, but it has had a reputation for suffering from powdery mildew. A big breakthrough came with ‘David’, a cultivar originating from a seed-grown stand at Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, sourced from native populations in the Brandywine Valley. It has been the standard white garden phlox for many years because of its mildew resistance, but it may be too tall for certain sites and has been too short-lived for some gardeners. If you like the crisp white flower power of ‘David’, you will enjoy ‘Peacock White’ as much, if not more. The bright white flowers of ‘Peacock White’ are richly fragrant with a sweet, ‘old-fashioned’ garden phlox smell that has been lost in some of the more recent cultivars. They make great cut flowers, and hold flowers noticeably longer than many other cultivars.

The Peacock series of phlox was bred to be disease-resistant, heat-tolerant, tidy, and compact. Even in the heat and humidity of the South, ‘Peacock White’ is a standout in the garden with no mildew. Reaching 18 to 24 inches tall, it works well in the front to middle of the border. As with most garden phlox, it will bloom from early summer to fall when grown in favorable sites. Cutting back by one-third will encourage the formations of new but smaller flower clusters. Even without deadheading, Peacock White will often continue to flower most of the summer, especially when grown in good garden conditions.

‘Minnie Pearl’ phlox has quickly risen to the top of the perennial world for its bountiful floral display and mildew-free foliage. Its lavish floral parade begins in late April to early May and lasts four to six weeks. The glowing white flowers that are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds are produced in 3-inch clusters atop stems adorned with narrow glossy green leaves. We have found in the UT Gardens, Jackson, that when grown in rich garden soil, it will flower a second time on its own, but if cut back and given a shot of a water-soluble fertilizer, it will often flower a third time.

‘Minnie Pearl’ makes a good cut flower. It grows 12 to 18 inches tall with the clump expanding by underground root, making a patch 2 feet wide in three years.

This naturally occurring hybrid between Phlox maculata and possibly Phlox glaberrima was found along the roadside in Mississippi by plantswoman Karen Partlow. It eventually made its way to nurseryman Tony Avent who named and introduced it in 2003. Just like the Grand Ole Opry character Minnie Pearl, this plant is chockful of life and charisma and will make a captivating addition to any garden.

Hardy to zone 4 both ‘Peacock White’ and ‘Minnie Pearl’ prefer full sun to part shade and like most of us, a little afternoon shade is always appreciated. They are drought-tolerant once established; grow well in average garden conditions but perform best in rich, moist, well-drained soil; and appreciate supplemental water during periods of drought. Both phlox pair well with small- to medium-sized summer perennials such as black-eyed Susan, Mexican feather grass, Siberian iris, red hot poker, salvia, and coreopsis. When room allows, planting in groups of three or five makes for a big impact.
TOP: Mexican Heather ‘Vermillionaire’
BOTTOM: Fan flower ‘Bombay Pink’
As Tennessee gardeners look toward spring planting, last year’s horrific summer heat and drought still linger in the minds of many. Fall and winter rainfall has been plentiful, do we dare? Even the weatherman can’t accurately predict several months ahead.

One course of action is to choose drought-tolerant bedding annuals that don’t need much water. However, young transplants must start out with a blissful six-week period of establishment. For them to perform, they want all the “goodies”: water, air, warm soil temperatures, light, and good soil nutrition.

To succeed, such annuals should be planted in good loamy garden soil containing humus or amended with compost. If the plants are to cope with stressful heat and drought, their root systems need to be extensive, capable to foraging soil depths for moisture and fertility. After planting, add 2 to 3 inches of a well-composted mulch to conserve soil moisture and to replenish the humus content of the soil.

Be aware that some tough drought-tolerant annuals perform poorly when summer weather is exceptionally moist and cooler than normal. Lantana, vinca, and salvia tend to languish and do not reach their full potential. All perform best in full sun and fail in soggy soils. They are rarely troubled by insect or disease problems unless seasonal weather patterns are unusually wet and cool.

Here are ten of the best drought-tolerant annuals. All have been top performers at the UT Gardens in past years.

**Vinca** (*Catharanthus roseus*), aka annual periwinkle, is covered with bright-colored blooms that sit atop sturdy 12- to 15-inch stems from late spring to fall. Flower colors come in a wide range: lavender, blue, red, pink, white, and bicolor. Top performers are Titan and Vitesse series.

**Mexican heather** (*Cuphea hyssopifolia*) produces fluted cigar-like purple, red, or orange flowers on compact 18- to 24-inch tall plants. Fine-textured foliage is glossy and bright green. Blooms continuously spring to fall. Cuphea Vermillionaire is a top UT Gardens performer.

**Silver nickel vine** (*Dichondra argentea* ‘Silver Falls’) is a creeping/trailing annual, at its best grown in baskets/containers or as a seasonal ground cover. Branched silver metallic stems are clad with round, fan-shaped, silver leaves that cascade downwards to 3 to 6 feet long in one summer. Tiny, greenish-colored spring flowers are not showy.

**Euphorbia** (*Euphorbia* hybrid) is finely textured and filled with a cloud of white, airy blooms from spring to fall. Leading cultivars are ‘Diamond Frost’, ‘Breathless’, and ‘White Manaus’.

**Globe amaranth** (*Gomphrena globosa*) is fast-growing, 1 to 4 feet high and wide (depending on cultivar) with colorful golf ball-sized flower heads at the ends of long sturdy stems. Flower colors include white, pink, lavender, and purple. Favorite series include Las Vegas and Audray and cultivar ‘Fireworks’.

**Lantana** (*Lantana x*), aka purslane, has thick succulent-like leaves and flowers that open during working hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Best cultivar series include Yubi, ‘Rio Grande’, Sundial, and Mojave.

**Fan flower** (*Scaevola aemula*) grows 3 to 6 inches high and 1 to 3 feet wide, with spoon-shaped leaves and fan-shaped bluish flowers (also purple-, pink-, and white-blooming cultivars). Leading cultivar series are Bombay, Surdiva, and Blue Wonder.

**Lemon coral sedum** (*Sedum rupestre* ‘Lemon Coral’) was a top-performing annual in 2015 and a favorite with visitors at the UT Gardens. Beautiful white blooms cover fine-textured, bright chartreuse foliage that takes on a tinge of coral color in autumn. Plants spread 12 to 24 inches wide and 3 to 6 inches in height.

**Mexican sunflower** (*Tithonia rotundifolia*) grows 4 to 6 feet in height with showy 3-inch-wide orange to yellow blooms from midsummer to fall. Leading cultivars: ‘Fiesta del Sol’ and the Torch series.

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**MODERATELY DROUGHT-TOLERANT ANNUALS**

Copper plant (*Acalypha*)
Joseph’s coat (*Alternanthera*)
Summer snapdragon (*Angelonia*)
Ornamental chili pepper (*Capsicum*)
Cockscomb (*Celosia argentea*), (*C. argentea plumosa*)
Cosmos (*Cosmos spp.*)
Lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*)
Duranta ‘Gold Edge’ (*Duranta erecta*)
Dwarf morning glory (*Evolvulus*)
Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*)
Licorice plant (*Helichrysum*)
Starflower (*Pentas lanceolata*)
Geranium (*Pelargonium spp.*)
Cuban oregano (*Plectranthus*)
Salvia (*Salvia spp.—annual types*)
Dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*)
Marigold (*Tagetes spp.*)
Star zinnia (*Zinnia marylandica*)
IN THE
Gardens

UT GARDENS MAGAZINE
1. Each year we try to cap off the summer with an educational trip to another public garden with our interns and staff. In August 2016, we traveled to Yew Dell Botanical Garden outside Louisville, Kentucky, where we toured the grounds and visited our former intern Alice Kimbrell. (We had special permission to climb the tree for our photo.)

2. About forty volunteers from Scripps Networks joined us for their corporate volunteer day and helped us with various projects throughout the Gardens. This group helped Holly paint some repurposed plastic corrugated drain tile to be used as planters in our Children’s Garden. They were pretty happy about it!

3. If you build it, they will come. A family of mallard ducks made a home for themselves in our newly constructed wetland. This area quickly became very popular with children participating in our education programs. What could be of more interest than dragonflies, frogs, ducks, and tadpoles?

4. “Other duties that may be assigned” was in the job description for staff horticulture manager Ben Cordes. Little did he know that would include suit up and spray painting the inside of the Don Williams gazebo as we refurbished it for the new Holly Room being developed as an event venue.

5. A tribute tree program is under development so that folks can honor or memorialize friends and loved ones with a living symbol and contribute to the UT Gardens plant collection. Katherine Waitman honored her father, longtime UT Gardens supporter Henry McIlwaine, on Father’s Day with the planting of a contorted filbert.

6. “Bugs, Slugs, and Other Thugs” was the title of our pest and disease symposium held in June. Alan Windham and Frank Hale—both professors and Extension specialists with the UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center—provided very useful information to home gardeners about how to identify and control diseases and insects in the landscape.

7. We had lots of new visitors to the Gardens last summer when the popularity of the Pokémon Go game soared and hundreds of people had their phones out looking to capture their virtual prey. We had many players say they had never been to the Gardens before being steered here by the game.
1. Preparations are already underway for the 2017 Summer Celebration Lawn and Garden Show. It’s scheduled for Thursday, July 13, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visitors can look forward to a full day of engaging garden talks, tours, and exhibits. More info at west.tennessee.edu.

2. The *Rudbeckia fulgida* ‘Indian Summer’ (Black-eyed Susan) is an older cultivar, but it is always a big hit with garden visitors . . . both people and pollinators!

3. The UT Gardens, Jackson, redbud collection is in full bloom in April. See more than forty cultivars in colors ranging from neon pink to rosy magenta.

4. Find what’s been missing from your garden at one of our annual plant sales. The Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 6, from 7 a.m. to noon. We’ll also host a plant sale July 13 during the Summer Celebration Lawn and Garden Show. Visit our Facebook page for photos of plant sale offerings.
1. The KinderGarden music area is a perfect place for these young visitors to form a band.

2. A collection of Tennessee native plants makes a statement along this Crab Orchard stone path. Since they are longtime residents of the Cumberland Plateau, these plants look good no matter what Mother Nature hands out.

3. This rain garden was planted in fall 2013 using plants able to tolerate the periodic flooding that occurs when water runs off the office building into this area. The best part? This garden also can survive drought. It passed the drought test in late summer and fall 2016 with flying colors! Even the pink muhly grass, marginal on the Cumberland Plateau, was beautiful.

4. Young visitors to the Gardens enjoy activities such as this Critter Hunt.

5. When they get tired and need a break from music, what do they do? Grab a book from the Learning Cottage and enjoy a little quiet time with friends.

Despite bee colony collapse, pesticides, climate change, habitat shrinkage, and other threats to pollinator survival, there are not a great many books on the topic, and this is my pick of the lot.

Attracting Native Pollinators (ANP) was written by five educators and conservators with impressive academic degrees and experience. The 370 pages cover a multitude: The biology of pollination; threats to pollinators; pictorial guides to bees, butterflies, wasps, flies, moths, and beetles; how to watch bees (); life cycles; feeding habits; convergent evolution; regional plant lists; and preferred plants are just a sample. Considering its length and comprehension, one might reasonably expect some slow going. Not a bit of it. It’s a surprisingly easy read, due to good writing, copious color photographs, and excellent formatting and graphics.

There is worthwhile reading and something to learn on every page. Many gardeners have a keen interest in pollinators and a will to protect them, but how much do we really know about them?

Fact: Bees do most of the pollinating by far. More than 90 percent of the 4,000 species of North American bees lead solitary lives, not in colonies. Fact: Honeybees are not native to North America; bumblebees are, and there are forty-seven species of bumblebees. Native bees are faster and more efficient at producing honey. They forage longer and in adverse conditions (wet, cold) when honeybees don’t. Honeybees are used to pollinate agricultural crops chiefly because they are easier to transport. Fact: Hummingbirds (who have no sense of smell) are the major pollinators of unscented flowers. Moths do almost all of the pollinating of night-blooming plants . . . Did everybody but me already know all this?

ANP is divided into five major sections: Pollinators and Pollination, Taking Action, Bees of North America, and Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Landscape, with topical divisions within each part. Taking Action is the longest section, replete with to-do’s and how-to’s. This comes as no surprise, since the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (founded in 1971 and named for the extinct Xerces blue butterfly) has as its mission education and advocacy for preservation.

As a quick reference for plant selection, the plant-by-plant illustrated list of Recommended Pollinator and Butterfly Host Plants, in the Pollinator-Friendly Landscape section, is hard to beat, and better still, it is followed immediately by a butterfly-by-butterfly list, with a photograph of each, and paragraphs on first Native and then Introduced plants that attract them. Although gardeners may light first on this section, I’m guessing that for once, they will be just as enthralled and interested in the other, less familiar parts of the book. The active mind will chase the unknown.

Among other features, the Appendix includes educational ideas, a glossary, bibliography, sources for seed and equipment, organizations, and other resources. The book is available from online vendors and through interlibrary loan.
KNOXVILLE
Plan now for the many classes, workshops, movies, and events offered in the upcoming months in the UT Gardens, Knoxville, located just off Neyland Drive. This will be an exciting, fun-filled year with lots to do, learn, and buy.

All programs require preregistration. The Knoxville location of the Gardens now accepts fees online. If you wish to pay by cash or check contact Derrick Stowell at 865-974-7151 or dstowell@utk.edu for instructions. All start times are listed in Eastern Time.

UT Gardens Gala
April 28, 5:30 p.m.–9 p.m.
The fifth annual Gala, “Gardens Legends—Rooted in Traditions.” advanceUTIA.com/GardensGala2017

2017 Garden Discovery Camps
We have a variety of camps for all ages, ranging from a single day to weeklong sessions. Learn more at tiny.utk.edu/gogardencamp.

Adult and Family Programs
These hands-on workshops and programs provide horticulture instruction and the chance to make and take a variety of projects. Check them out at tiny.utk.edu/seriouslygardening.

JACKSON
For more information on all events, visit west.tennessee.edu or call 731-424-1643. All event start times are listed in Central Time.

Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale
May 6, 7 a.m.–noon
Summer Celebration Lawn and Garden Show
July 13, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Landscape Review
Sept. TBD, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Fall Plant Sale and Garden Lecture Series
Oct. 5, 2 p.m.–6 p.m.

CROSSVILLE
Seriously Gardening
This February we introduced our first garden series, an eight-week program called Sustainable Gardening. Stay tuned for our next series, Plant ID 101, taught by UT Gardens director Sue Hamilton starting in June. For more information visit tiny.utk.edu/seriouslygardening.

Spring Spectacular Plant Sale
Members only April 7, 4 p.m.–7 p.m.
Public, April 8, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
tiny.utk.edu/springspectacular

Native Plant Symposium and Sale
May 20, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
tiny.utk.edu/nativeplants

Field Trips to the KinderGarden:
Cumberland County Master Gardeners can provide an educational experience for groups of preschool and early elementary children. Contact Jennifer at the phone or email listed below left to schedule.

Small Fruits and Berries
April 8, 9–11:30 a.m.
Fee: None
Limit: 60

Bees, Buds, and Butterflies:
Education, Exhibits, Marketplace
April 21, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
April 22, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Fee: $3 covers admission for both days
Location: Cumberland County Fairgrounds

UT Gardens, Crossville, Plant Sale
Presale: May 5, 3–6 p.m.
UT Gardens members receive a 10 percent discount.
May 6, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Deer-Resistant Plants for the Plateau—Don’t Let Your Yard Be
Bambi’s Buffet
May 6, 10–11 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Tomatoes
May 13, 9–11:30 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Big Birds, Backyard Birds, and Bluebirds
May 16, 9:30–11 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Saving Seeds
May 19, 1–2:30 p.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Canning Basics: Water Bath and Pressure
May 20, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Fee: $25/Minimum: 8

Ugh! Weeds!
May 23, 9–11 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Straw Bale Gardening
May 10, 1–3 p.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Ground Covers
May 27, 9–10:30 a.m.
Fee: None

Plant Disease Identification and Common Sense Disease Management
June 1, 10–11:30 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Becoming Your Own Garden Detective
June 17, 9–11 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

AgResearch Providing Real Life Solutions.
June 22, 9–11 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 45

New Ways to Build Gardens Using Nature’s Principles
June 24, 9–10:30 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

Fall Vegetable Gardening
July 9, 9–11:30 a.m.
Fee: None/Limit: 60

International Master Gardener Conference Search for Excellence Award Presentation
July 10–14
Fee: Refer to conference information
Cumberland County Master Gardeners will accept the International Master Gardener Award on behalf of the UT Gardens, Crossville. More information at blogs.oregonstate.edu/2017mgc/schedule.

Freezing and Drying
July 27, 10 a.m.–noon
Fee: $15/Minimum: 8

Ninth Annual Fall Gardeners’ Festival
Aug. 29, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Fee: None
Visit ccmga.org or plateau.tennessee.edu after Aug. 1 to plan your visit!
2016

BEST & BEAUTIFUL

By James Newburn, Jason Reeves, Sue Hamilton, Beth Willis, Andy Pulte, Holly Jones, and Carol Reese
Full details and descriptions of plants can be found on the UT Gardens, Knoxville, website at tiny.utk.edu/gardensbest2016.

BEST IN SHOW
*Capsicum* (Ornamental Pepper) Sedona Sun—PanAmerican Seed

BEST SEED VARIETIES
*Catharanthus* (Vinca) Titan Really Red—PanAmerican Seed
*Capsicum* ‘Hot Pops Purple’—PanAmerican Seed

TOP ROOTED CUTTING VARIETIES
*Artemisia* Quicksilver—Proven Winners
*Calibrachoa* Superbells Hollywood Star—Proven Winners
*Lantana* Lucky Red—Ball FloraPlant

TOP SERIES
*Ipomoea* (Sweet potato vine) Sweet Caroline series—Proven Winners
*Catharanthus* (Vinca) Valiant series—PanAmerican/Keift

TRIED AND TRUE
*Petunia* Supertunia Vista Bubblegum—Proven Winners
*Canna* ‘South Pacific Scarlet’

AWESOME ANNUALS
*Angelonia* Angelface Perfectly Pink—Proven Winners
*Angelonia* Archangel Cherry Red—Ball FloraPlant
*Angelonia* Archangel Blue Bicolor—Ball FloraPlant
* Begonia* Megawatt series—PanAmerican Seed
*Calibrachoa* Superbells Coralberry Punch—Proven Winners
*Calibrachoa* Superbells Pomegranate Punch—Proven Winners
*Calibrachoa* StarShine Pink—Selecta
*Calibrachoa* Cabaret Sky Blue—Ball FloraPlant
*Canna*—Cannova Mango Ball Ingenuity
*Coleus* Inferno—Ball FloraPlant
*Coleus French Quarter—Ball FloraPlant
*Coleus* Ruby Slipper—Ball FloraPlant
*Cyperus* (papyrus)—Prince Tut—Proven Winners
*Cyperus* (papyrus)—King Tut—Proven Winners
*Echinacea*—‘Feeling Pink’
*Impatiens* (Interspecific) Big Bounce Pink—Selecta
*Impatiens* (Interspecific) Bounce Bright Coral—Selecta
*Impatiens* (Interspecific) Bounce Violet 17—Selecta
*Marigold* Taishan series—PanAmerican Seed
*Pentas* ‘Graffiti Pink’—Benary Seed
*Pentas* ‘Graffiti White’—Benary Seed
*Petunia* Supertunia Vista Fuchsia Improved—Proven Winners
*Petunia* ColorRush Pink—Ball FloraPlant
*Petunia* ColorRush Purple—Ball FloraPlant
*Petunia* Night Sky Selecta
*Verbena* Superbena Royale Peachy Keen—Proven Winners
*Verbena* Superbena Royale Romance—Proven Winners
*Verbena EnduraScape Magenta—Ball FloraPlant
*Verbena EnduraScape Purple Improved—Ball FloraPlant
*Verbena EnduraScape Pink Bicolor—Ball FloraPlant
*Vinca* Valient series—PanAmerican Seed/Keift
*Vinca* Titan series—PanAmerican Seed
*Zinnia* Zahara XL Fire Improved—PanAmerican Seed
*Zinnia* Zahara XL Yellow—PanAmerican Seed
*Zinnia* Zahara XL White—PanAmerican Seed

PROMISING AND PROVEN PERENNIALS
*Monarda* (Bee Balm) Sugar Buzz series
*Sedum* SunSparkler series
*Penstemon* Red Rock

TREMENDOUS TREES AND SHRUBS
*Acer japonicum* ‘Aconitifolium’—‘Aconitifolium’ full moon maple
*Acer rubrum* Redpointe—Redpointe Maple
*Cryptomeria japonica* ‘Gyokuryu’—‘Gyokuryu’ Japanese Cedar
*Distylium*
*Lagerstroemia* indica ‘Royalty’—‘Royalty’ crape myrtle
*Lagerstroemia* indica ‘Sacramento’—‘Sacramento’ weeping crape myrtle
*Liquidambar styraciflua* Happidaze (syn. ‘Hapdell’)—Happidaze American sweetgum
*Viburnum nudum* ‘Brandywine’—Possumhaw viburnum
*Viburnum plicatum tomentosum* ‘Summer Snowflake’—‘Summer Snowflake’ doublefile viburnum
*Viburnum lantana* ‘Variegatum’—Variegated lantana viburnum

INCREDIBLE EDIBLES
*Allium tuberosum* ‘Geisha’—‘Geisha’ garlic chives
*Rubus fruticosus* ‘Triple Crown’—‘Triple Crown’ Blackberry

REMARKABLE ROSES
Dream Come True
Firefighter
Julia Child
Good as Gold
South Africa Sunbelt
In 2004, Cumberland County Master Gardeners began making plans to develop a series of gardens at the Plateau AgResearch and Education Center. The next year brought the beginnings of the Plateau Discovery Gardens. Like most new projects, there was good energy generated, weeds pulled, busy gardeners gardening, and ambitious plans for expansion. But sometimes those worthwhile goals fall aside, and that happened to us. We were floundering.

Then Extension Master Gardener Nancy Christopherson joined us. Some people naturally exude positive thoughts, energy, and enthusiasm. Nancy is one of those people. Her background is in teaching, and it shows. Soon we had classes on the grounds and welcomed the public to learn about all things horticulture. Then there were plant sales with accompanying plant education. An annual field trip for all the kindergarteners in our county? A Fall Gardeners’ Festival? Nancy said it would work, and work it does.

Any successful organization has a few exceptional bursts of creativity in the form of a person. Thank you, Nancy, for being that person.
Being a volunteer takes some muscle as Madison County Master Gardeners (left to right) Diane Griffin, Tharon Kirk, and Andrea Love, well know. When these supporters help out, it can feel like a workout. Digging, raking, weeding, mulching, and of course, setting up for seasonal plant sales are certainly not for the weak. Anyone know how many calories are burned when deadlifting a redbud?

Gardening is a great workout, and like exercise it takes discipline and dedication to see results. We’re fortunate to have a group of volunteers at the UT Gardens, Jackson, who exhibit both of these traits—willing to tackle any job, catch their breath, and then move on to the next task. The work is often tough, but then, so are our volunteers, and their efforts help keep our grounds beautiful year-round. We’re grateful for all the time, sweat, and sore muscles. Thank you, volunteers!

Eighty-eight new and veteran volunteers joined UT Gardens, Knoxville, staff on March 8 at our annual Volunteer Appreciation and Kickoff Luncheon. The Gardens recognized three outstanding volunteers: Don Fike and Wendell Thomas (pictured at left and right respectively) were selected as the 2016 Volunteers of the Year for their work renovating the raised beds in the Kitchen Garden, and Dr. David Craig (center) was named the 2017 Distinguished Service Award recipient for his contributions to the UT Gardens over many years. We also recapped the accomplishments of 2016. One hundred twenty volunteers contributed 3,318 service hours, which has a value to the Gardens of $78,172 ($23.56/hour published by Independent Sector’s valuation of volunteer time to nonprofit organizations). We love to celebrate our volunteers and look forward to the coming year. If you are interested in joining us, we have opportunities ranging from our weekly sessions in the garden/greenhouse to special events and educational programming. No particular garden experience is required; in fact, volunteering is a great way to learn new skills and to meet a wonderful group of gardeners!
PERENNIALS THAT FLOUT THE DROUGHT

By Carol Reese, UT Extension Western Region Horticulture Specialist
There are many perennials that survive, even thrive in dry settings, yet still provide long weeks of color. Many of them are also adapted to poor gravelly soil.

Autumn sage (Salvia greggii) is native to Texas and Mexico, and usually found on rocky slopes. Many times the plants that thrive in that part of the world do not adapt well to the challenges of southeastern soils and humidity, but this one does so admirably. The name autumn sage is misleading, since it begins bountifully in early spring and continues to the hard frosts of fall. Granted flowering slows, sometimes considerably, during the dog days of summer, but it is a rare week that you won’t find at least a sprinkling of flowers, good news for the hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies that find it irresistible. This is one of the salvias that develops into a woody, shrubby mound, and is usually evergreen, though this can vary by site and severity of winter. It is often found in shades of red, but selections and breeding efforts have resulted in various pink, purple, and even white forms.

When gardeners hear the word “mint,” many will shy away, having struggled to eradicate bad mannered mats of meddlesome culinary mints. Catmint is not that kind of boorish garden citizen!

The catmints (Nepeta spp.) are a large group, and many are extremely drought tolerant. One of the most used and available is Nepeta racemosa ‘Walker’s Low’, and for good reason. The bloom season is long and the flowers irresistible to our winged friends. Catmint’s aromatic foliage is not palatable to deer, and it will form a durable clump that knows its place in the garden.

Multiple spikes of blue flowers spring into action early (pun intended) but production slows as summer advances. The old flowers make the plant a bit frowsy, so for a fresh show you can shear it back in early summer, even again in late summer . . . or choose to do nothing. It will perform adequately with benign neglect.

Euphorbias are also known for their love of dry soil, and many forms have appeared in the trade in recent years, most often chosen for outstanding foliage. Unfortunately, many of them are not adapted to southern settings and departed.

Not so with Euphorbia characias ssp. wulfenii. This durable form has not become as popular as it deserves, probably because it has never been labeled with a memorable common name. You might see websites that call it spurge, but spurge is the common name for all euphorbia, and there are hundreds of different ones. This splendid plant must be sought under a splendidly complicated name, but it is well worth it. The striking blue-green foliage forms a large shrub-like mass, evergreen in most Tennessee winters. Strange chartreuse blooms arrive in spring and are often described as “alien,” but foliage is the prime asset. It can reseed in suitable sites, but rarely does anyone complain, as it is so gratifying to find a garden worthy euphorbia that likes you back. If you do want to remove the seedlings, don gloves, and use caution as the milky sap can irritate the skin.

A much underutilized drought-tolerant native is the vividly flowered winecup, also called purple poppy mallow. Found on rocky, poor slopes, this low-growing plant flings generous sprawls of low-growing magenta flowers. Like a good dinner guest, it complements adjacent plant neighbors, mingling without overwhelming. The big show is late spring, but winecup offers sporadic blooms throughout the summer, especially in months less sultry. It will often disappear late in the growing season, going dormant earlier than most, but reliably reappears in spring with a new season of vibrant color.

These plants offer thrilling performances at your mailbox, or any other site distant from moisture. Water in well a couple of times after planting, but then you can simply offer them a wave and a little applause as you pass each day.
HILLS & HOLLER HORTICULTURE

By Natalie Bumgarner, UT Extension Residential and Consumer Horticulture Specialist
I am convinced there are few experiences that compare with being in the woods to greet spring. The forest floor beats any florist store, in my opinion . . .

I admit to some bias, though, because spring has been linked with hills, hollows, and wildflowers for as long as I can remember. There were treks to the Dutchman’s britches down by the old railroad tracks, the dogtooth violet patch by the creek, and my uncle Max’s (not really very) secret spot for ramps. So it felt completely normal to spend my weekends welcoming spring in the East Tennessee and western North Carolina mountains. The more I ponder the beauty of our mountains and meadows, the more I dream of bringing the influence of those backwoods to backyards. (Notice I say the influence of woodland species, not the plants themselves. In most cases, we want to leave those native beauties where they are because permission is required if on private land and specific permits are required if on public lands. Often, wild plants do not transition well to domestic gardens. So, get some inspiration, and then support your local nursery or seed supplier.)

This past year was my introduction to the beauty of fringed Phacelia (*Phacelia fimbriata*), which is endemic to higher elevation deciduous forests in a few southeastern states. On an April afternoon, you can find roadsides and hillsides in the Great Smoky Mountains covered with a generally white mist along the forest floor. Impressive in mass at a distance, the detail of the flowers is also subtly stunning up close. Even the ecology of these plants, which are fall-germinating winter annuals, is notable. The presence of annuals is rather uncommon in a forest floor environment traditionally dominated by perennials. Since they must establish every year, moisture and surface conditions are important.

Several options are available to integrate species of Phacelia into a woodland garden for beauty and value to pollinators. Purple phacelia (*P. bipinnatifida*), a biennial that has a wider native range, also prefers moist, fertile soil and filtered light. Miami mist (*P. purshii*) is an annual species with a lavender flower that closely resembles *P. fimbriata* that may be a bit more versatile in site conditions. It is possible to start many of these species from seed.

If you’re looking for more woodland inspiration this spring, choose a path that weaves through a cove, along a stream bank, or meanders in a mesic forest and you may be rewarded with an introduction to the native habitat of one of our most common shade perennials. *Tiarella cordifolia* has airy blooms opening from bottom to top, making its common name, foamflower, self-explanatory. I have been a fan of *Tiarella* and its cousin *Heuchera* (coral bells) since I was a teenager working in garden centers. A bit more shade- and moisture-loving than their *Heuchera* cousins, foamflowers take advantage of the spring light before the canopy closes to carry out much of their energy production for the year. Called semi-evergreen, their leaves also make good use of fall light after tree leaves drop. The diversity of *Tiarella* cultivars now in trade provides the woodland-inclined gardener a near dizzying array of options. My favorites are the cultivars with the most distinct dark venation in the center of the leaves, such as ‘Mystic Mist’ or ‘Pirates Patch’ and ‘Appalachian Trial’, both for color and its great name. However, there are options to fit about any taste in leaf color, shape, flower color, and height, so let your imagination run wild.

I could ramble for miles, or pages, in this case, about natives that can add richness to our gardens. Go ahead—take a walk and fall in love all over again with some of our Tennessee spring wildflowers. And remember to look above the beauty of the forest floor to enjoy a few redbuds.
If plant nurseries were said to possess spirit animals, then Jackson Nursery could rightfully claim the phoenix.

Just as the mythical bird rises to new life from ashes, the Belvidere, Tennessee, nursery emerged from a devastating freeze in 2007 despite losing $3.5 million in inventory—more or less everything that owners Ray and Cindy Jackson had. Damage from the freeze forced other nurseries in southeast Tennessee to shutter their businesses. Cindy wondered if she and her husband needed to move on, too. So, she asked God for a sign to know if they should quit or struggle to start over. It was soon after she found the seedling that became the nursery’s acclaimed *Cercis canadensis*, aptly named *The Rising Sun*. With vivid colors, this new and distinct native Eastern redbud became the foundation for the couple’s recovery. It also was the start of their acclaim in the nursery industry.

The Rising Sun is far from the nursery’s sole achievement. Other introductions by the self-taught hybridizer include blackgums, a weeping native persimmon and other hybrid redbuds. Arriving this spring are Blue Ray kousa dogwood, named for its strongly colored blue leaves, and Golden Fleece blackgum, also named for its distinctive color. Yet it is redbuds that remain the central focus of the nursery’s inventory and breeding program, followed by dogwoods.

Demand for Jackson Nursery’s quality plant stock has enabled Ray and Cindy to expand their operation from its original 5 acres in 1987 to 75 acres today, which includes twenty-five greenhouses and an arboretum for performance testing on site. In a typical year, the nursery ships some 200,000 bare-root trees to clients throughout the nation.

Ray says he’s never been more excited about the two trees becoming available to gardeners this spring and next. The 2018 introduction is the outstanding new Ragin Red dogwood. With the deepest red bloom of any known dogwood and foliage that remains deep red across the growing season, Ragin Red is expected to be in huge demand. This dogwood was discovered by the Jacksons’ son, Jeremiah. Both he and older brother Joshua work in the family nursery.

Next year, Ray’s dramatic Black Pearl redbud arrives. Its purple foliage is so dark it appears black, and like Ragin Red, the leaves hold their rich color throughout the growing season.

Today, as Ray reflects upon three decades as an independent nurseryman, he says he’s found the most rewards in being his own boss and in achieving distinctive new plants. With Cindy heading the nursery’s business functions, this couple and their nursery continue to provide trees that delight gardeners for their unique traits and exceptional performance.
In spring, before tender herbs can be added to the kitchen garden, it’s versatile perennials such as rosemary (Rosemarinus officinalis) that really shine. The needle-like leaves of this Mediterranean native have a resinous aroma and flavor that enhances so many foods. While the herb’s best known use is as an accent or marinade for lamb and chicken, rosemary is also wonderful added to omelets and frittatas, as well as tomato sauces and soups. One herbalist recommends combining rosemary with potatoes, onion, and a little basil for a true comfort food. Another way to use is to mince or puree it and add to olive oil for a dipping sauce used with bread.

Rosemary comes in many varieties, and some are optimized for landscape use. All forms can be used in cooking, ones with “officinalis” in their botanical name are considered culinary herbs. Many of these have more upright growth for easier harvest and a higher oil content. Chefs often prefer ‘Tuscan Blue’ for taste, and Tennessee gardeners like ‘Arp’, which often is one of best to survive hard winters. The array of others you may find include ‘Salem’, ‘Blue Spires’, ‘Spice Island’, ‘Benenden Blue’, ‘Flora Rosa’, ‘Majorca Pink’, ‘Albiflorus’, ‘Huntington Carpet’, ‘McConnell’s Blue’, ‘Irene’, ‘Holly Hyde’, and ‘Hill Hardy’.

Opinions on fertilizing and fertilizer ratio are as plentiful as the varieties themselves. Mid South gardeners advocate scant use of fertilizer the first year to allow the slow-growing herb to establish roots. After that, an application of fertilizer in spring is useful. More important is to harvest the herb before it produces flowers for best flavor. Simply cut stems long enough to ensure you have enough leaves for your recipe.

A favorite recipe shared by members of the Memphis Herb Society shows off the wonderful flavor of both rosemary and pine nuts. You’ll find this easy-to-make shortbread great for parties and gatherings, or simply to enjoy at home.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Spread pine nuts on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until a shade darker, about 5 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside. Melt butter in a medium saucepan, remove from heat and stir in sugar, rosemary, salt, and nuts. Combine until sugar is dissolved. Stir in flour to make a stiff dough. Spread dough evenly in an 8-inch ungreased baking pan. Bake about 20 minutes at 325 degrees until dough is golden around the edges and firm in the middle. Cool on rack for a few minutes, then cut into squares. Let cool in pan at least 15 minutes before removing from pan.

**TIPS:**
- Harvest a generous amount of rosemary because chopping can reduce the volume of whole leaves by as much as a third.
- Watch closely as you toast the pine nuts because any nut can burn in a matter of seconds. Five minutes was on target for my vintage ‘70s oven—harvest gold if you ask.
- The bars are easier to remove from the pan before they cool completely.

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**TUSCAN ROSEMARY AND PINE NUT BARS**

- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1/2 cup butter (1 stick)
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup flour
The mission of the UT Gardens, the State Botanical Garden, is to be a resource for the state of Tennessee, with locations in Knoxville, Crossville, and Jackson.

However, the UT Gardens could not exist if it were not for the generosity and support of countless volunteers and donors across the state.

We wanted to show you just a snapshot of where your investment to the UT Gardens goes as well as try to show the impact the UT Gardens has each and every year across the state. Thank you for supporting the UT Gardens.

GARDENS’ DONATIONS

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WHAT DONORS HELPED BUILD IN 2016

- In Knoxville, the treehouse in the children’s garden was completed.
- Construction began in Crossville on a new pavilion thanks to generous donors.
- Donor dollars allowed a Gardens intern in Jackson to attend the national Perennial Plant Symposium held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Knoxville expanded its collections thanks to monetary and physical donations to the Gardens.
- Volunteers in Crossville keep the Gardens green. There are no paid Gardens staff at the Crossville location.
- In Jackson, the much-anticipated Spring Plant Sales and Summer Celebration happen thanks to the volunteer efforts of Jackson-area Master Gardeners.
- Donors sponsored two summer internships in the Crossville Gardens.
- Knoxville was able to continue funding for staff positions thanks to an extremely successful VOLstarter campaign.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT THE UT GARDENS

“UT Gardens is one of the few remaining green spaces on campus and should be preserved. It is a wonderful educational resource, and serves the public as well.”

“I love the Gardens and want others to be able to experience them. Flowers, photons, and fresh air can do a body good.”

“The Gardens are a special place providing education, beauty, and community contact between UT and the public.”

ADVANCEUTIA.COM/GARDENSGIFT

*All figures are approximations of impacts across all three locations, unless otherwise noted.*
GARDEN TRENDS

Let 2017 Be Your Year of Green

By Andy Pulte, PhD, UT Gardens, Knoxville

If you’re a non-gardener who happened to find this publication at a bus stop or doctor’s office, I’ll let you in on something that all gardeners know: Green is king!

Flowers are nice, but it’s green that ties everything together in the garden. I was excited to see color experts Pantone choose Greenery as their annual color of the year. “The tangy yellow-green speaks to our desire to express, explore, experiment, and reinvent, imparting a sense of buoyancy,” said Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. “Through its reassuring yet assertive vibrancy, Greenery offers us self-assurance and boldness to live life on our own terms, during a time when we are redefining what makes us successful and happy.”

When Pantone releases its color of the year it is both reporting and predicting trends in fashion, home décor, graphic design, and beyond. When we use different shades of green in the garden we are building a structure to show off everything the garden has to offer. Green is known to be a soothing color, but it has gotten a bad rap in design circles and inspired repugnance in past generations for its fundamental association with mental institutions and hospitals. “Institutional green” is now long forgotten, and if the folks at Pantone are correct, we should be seeing beautiful green used widely in the future.

My grandmother was always fond of saying, “Green is the color of hope.” For plants green is more practical, as we know green is the color of the engine known as chlorophyll that creates energy from the sun. For gardeners green can be employed in a variety of intentional ways to ensure continuity in the garden. First, green is a wonderful partner to other colors. Corals, salmons, and pinks visually come alive laid over green. However, most impacted is the color white, which is visually transformed in the presence of green. White on its own in the garden is lost, yet paired with different hues of green it comes alive.

Sue Hamilton, director of the UT Gardens, often gives a talk on how to create a well-balanced garden. One of the tips she gives is “great gardens have great backdrops.” Just like color on your walls or curtains on your windows, a garden containing a backdrop of plant material creates a space where everything in the foreground looks better. Screens of green in just the right places on the edges and sides of the garden create an important sense of enclosure.

This is where green really can take center stage as many conifers and broadleaf evergreens fit the bill for just such an application.

As we start a new year in the garden, I encourage you to have hope as the green of spring emerges. The color of new, fresh foliage in the spring garden is something that can only be imitated and not truly duplicated. So when you see someone wearing a dress or tie in this year’s most trendy color, invite that person to your garden for a look at the real deal.

My grandmother was always fond of saying, ‘Green is the color of hope.’

ABOVE: Having a background of green helps everything in the garden stand out even more.
BELOW LEFT: Without green, white is lost in the garden.
BELOW RIGHT: Greenery, Pantone’s 2017 Color of the Year. Photo courtesy of Pantone.
In September, the UT Gardens, Knoxville, debuted the Nest, a treehouse designed by Sanders Pace Architecture. The treehouse is the signature element of a much bigger project for the UT Gardens, Knoxville. A Children’s Garden, which will include another playhouse, a climbing web, tunnel, digging pit, shade pavilion, and a water feature, is set to open this spring. It is the second such space in the State Botanical Garden. The UT Gardens, Crossville, debuted its KinderGarden in 2015.
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